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Multi Academy Trust / Academy Internal Scrutiny Service

Juniper Education provide an Internal Controls Evaluation Service for more than 300 academies at present and are looking to continue to grow this side of the business. The work undertaken in academies is designed to support the following requirements of academy trusts:

a) trusts must have a programme of internal scrutiny to provide independent assurance to the board that its financial and other controls, and risk management procedures, are operating effectively (Section 3.1 of the Academies Financial Handbook). The service we provide supports audit committees or other committees with delegated audit responsibility and/or appointed Responsible Officers in complying with this requirement.
b) The academies Accounting Officer's 'statement on regularity, propriety and compliance' which must be included in the academy trust's annual report, Section 4.13 of the Academies Financial Handbook.

The standard programme of work includes three reviews during an academy's financial year, which are normally one review each term. Review dates would be agreed in advance to try and ensure key academy staff are available which will help each review run smoothly. Prior to each review a detailed list of the required supporting information and documentation will be sent to the academy to aid preparation.

Our team of ICE Review Consultants include several professionally qualified accountants who have experience of working in both commercial and educational establishments.

Standard Internal Scrutiny Review templates are used to review and test an academy's internal controls and procedures. These templates are regularly reviewed and updated to incorporate legislative changes, updated ESFA guidance, and guidance offered by statutory auditors. The evaluation is designed to provide members/trustees/local governors of academies with a level assurance that appropriate financial controls are in place within the academy trust for which they have responsibility and include testing of adherence to the approved Schemes of Delegation of Financial Power and compliance with the Academies Financial Handbook.

A flexible approach is offered to academies and multi academy trusts, and we will customise our programme of work to suit the requirements of an audit committee. Additional work can be undertaken if agreed in advance, for which there will be an additional cost. Any change to the standard programme must be discussed with Carly Quick-Croxford, Audit Manager, by email Carly.QuickCrockford@junipereducation.org or by phoning our Governance Support Helpdesk on 0345 646 0515.

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A brief outline of the standard programme of work for 2021/22 is as follows:

Financial Review

Non-Financial Governance: ½ day review	
Internal scrutiny of controls and processes relating to Policies, Transparency, Publication of information.	
Financial Oversight	Appointment of Accounting Officer (newly formed multi academy trusts only)
	Appointment of Chief Financial Officer (newly formed multi academy trusts only)
	Appointment of statutory auditors
Transparency	Get Information About Schools register
	Register of Persons with Significant Control
	Member & trustee declaration of interests
	Staff declaration of interests
	Disclosure of interests at meetings
	Managing related party transactions
	Publication of member & trustee interests and other required information on the academy / multi academy trust website
Gifts (received and given)	Policy
	Register
Risk Management	Register of Operating Risks and schedule of review
	Contingency and Business Continuity Plan
	Review of statutory audit Management Letter
Data Protection	Data protection registration (multi academy trusts only)
VAT	VAT registration (multi academy trusts only)
Internal Scrutiny	Review of internal controls evaluation scope of work
	Review of internal controls evaluation reports
	Review of 'Dear Accounting Officer' letters
	Frequency of board and committee meetings
	Review of pupil numbers
	Key performance indicators
	Follow up of previous 'high priority' ICE recommendations
	Audit - governance
	Whistleblowing

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Financial Governance: ½ day review	
Internal controls and processes in place for Reporting, Scheme of Delegation and Financial Planning and Monitoring.	
Financial Oversight	Scheme of Delegation of Financial Powers
	Finance governance and Terms of Reference
Financial Planning and Monitoring	Budget forecast return
	Academy / Multi Academy Trust budget
	Budget Monitoring
	Reporting to Trustees
	Control Account Reconciliations
Expenses	Policy
Internal Control	Bad debt write off

Payroll: ½ day review	
Review to determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of the controls and processes in place, around administration, approval, and segregation of duties in all areas of payroll processing.	
Payroll Processing	Payroll provider contract/SLA
	Process of independent review
	Sample testing of staff contracts and payments to staff
	Contract change approval & segregation of duties
Mileage and Subsistence Payments	Authorisation
	Payment
Payments for Additional Hours Worked	Authorisation
	Segregation of duties
Special Payments	Approved policy

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Income: ½ day review	
Review to determine the controls and process in place for income and, if applicable, testing to determine the effectiveness of the controls.	
Receipt of Payments from Students and Parents	Income processing policy & procedures
Generated Income	Income policy & procedures for generated income
Internal Control – (Income Sample)	Financial discipline
	Audit trail
	Completeness of income (including arrears)
	Financial monitoring of activities
	Segregation of duties

Banking: ½ day review	
Review to establish the effectiveness of the controls and processes for banking and BACS transactions.	
Internal Control	Bank account structure
	Payment authorisation procedures
	Separation of duties (including on-line banking and BACS payments)
	Security of cheque and BACS payments
Cash Management	Bank reconciliations - frequency & review process
	Sample testing of bank reconciliations
	Authorised signatories / specimen signature list

Procurement: ½ day review	
Review to establish the effectiveness of controls and processes for all areas of procurement.	
Internal Procedure	Delegated authorisation levels
	Purchase cards
	Petty cash
Proper and Regular Use of Public Funds	Value for money procedures
	Quotations & annual contracts
	Tenders
Internal Control	Sample testing of purchase orders & invoices
Related Parties	Recognising related parties

Procurement: ½ day review	
Review to establish the effectiveness of controls and processes for all areas of procurement.	
	Related party transactions
Tax Implications	Payments made to individuals for HMRC compliance

Note: the contents of above sections are subject to constant review and change based on updated guidance. Other areas of internal control may be reviewed at the discretion of the ICE Review Consultant.

Delivery dates of reports are agreed between the consultant and finance lead at the academy and are conditional on dates agreed for submission of information being met.